Vendor Interactions

All physicians and other UAB Health System (UABHS) staff must ensure that interactions with vendors do not interfere with independent decision-making related to selection of therapies for patients or to the purchase of products and services from vendors. To clarify these often-murky areas, UABHS has issued an administrative standard “Interactions with Vendors” that details what behavior is acceptable for all employees of entities managed by UABHS, including University Hospital, The Kirklin Clinic®, and the satellite clinics. The School of Medicine (SOM) at UAB also has adopted this standard.

For example, it is inappropriate to allow vendors to fund purely social events, such as departmental or division Christmas parties. Physicians and staff may still accept modest meals if they are provided as part of an educational activity, such as UAB journal clubs or presentations of scientific papers at local restaurants.

It is also permissible to allow vendors to sponsor grand rounds and educational conferences, as long as SOM or Health System employees have sole control over the content and faculty. Vendors also may provide funds for medical students, residents, or other health care professionals in training to attend educational conferences, as long as the donation is made not to the individual — but to the hospital or School of Medicine department, which must choose the conference and the attendees.

Physicians and employees may not accept gifts of a personal nature from vendors.

AWARENESS IS KEY

The full standard can be viewed on the SPP-SCR Web on UAB computers. Visit https://scr.hs.uab.edu/ and select the UAB Health System tab. Type “vendor interactions” into the search box and click on “search.”

Awareness of the standard is important to comply with federal “kick-back” regulations and state law. UABHS and SOM health care professionals can consult for or advise vendors, including not only pharmaceutical and medical device companies, but also hardware and software companies and accounting, legal, and consulting firms. First, a written contract specifying the specific services and payment from the vendor must be obtained. The legal office must then approve the agreement. Payment should reflect fair market value for bona fide services.

TEST YOURSELF!

CONSULTING/ADVISORY SERVICES

Q: May a faculty member enter into a consulting agreement with a medical device manufacturer to advise on general medical and business issues and provide guidance on product development and research programs for the manufacturer's products and for which the faculty member is compensated?

A: Yes, if the services are legitimate, reasonable, and necessary, if there is a written agreement describing the services in some detail, and if the compensation is fair market value. These agreements should be negotiated with the manufacturer's research division and not through their marketing or sales division. The agreements should be reviewed by UAB legal counsel.

Q: A pharmaceutical company submits a proposal to a School of Medicine department whereby the
company proposes to pay the department for the opportunity to work with faculty members to assemble groups of patients for the purpose of talking with the patients about their chronic medical condition. The company also requests faculty members assist in educating their sales force about certain medical conditions. May the department accept the proposal?

A: No, it is not appropriate for departments, faculty, or staff to accept payment from vendors for access to patients or for access to other faculty members who are in a position to order the company’s products.

PRESENTATIONS AND MEALS

Q: May a vendor provide pizza for the staff of a clinic office?
A: Yes, if the vendor representative provides an informational presentation to the staff in conjunction with the meal, so long as the location of the presentation is conducive to scientific or educational communication. A vendor dropping off food for staff that is not associated with a program is not appropriate.

Q: May vendors support medical resident journal clubs convened monthly at local restaurants, where there are educational presentations made by the residents?
A: Yes, as long as the educational presentation is the primary activity.

Q: A medical equipment manufacturer invites several UAB employees to a corporate suite at a professional baseball game for a 45-minute scientific and educational presentation, followed by a buffet and the baseball game. May the employees attend?
A: No, because educational activities should not be accompanied by the provision of entertainment.

Q: May vendors support holiday parties or other departmental social events?
A: No, because these are solely personal in nature.

EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCES AND OTHER DONATIONS

Q: May the hospital pharmacy accept donations from a pharmaceutical company for pharmacists and staff to attend educational conferences?
A: Yes. The hospital pharmacy must choose the recipients and the conferences; these decisions cannot be made or recommended by the pharmaceutical company.

Q: May the hospital solicit donations from vendors to support its fundraising activities, such as a golf tournament in support of the patient assistance fund?
A: Yes, as long as it is clear that the donations do not guarantee, and are not tied to, any business from UAB.

Q: May vendors support grand rounds lectures?
A: Yes, vendors may support educational activities.

GIFTS

Q: May faculty accept a stethoscope from a vendor?
A: Yes, because it is related to clinical practice.

Q: May faculty or staff accept City Stages tickets from vendors?
A: No, because faculty and staff may not accept gifts of a personal nature from vendors.

Q: May faculty or staff accept gift certificates to a local restaurant from a vendor?
A: No, because faculty and staff may not accept gifts of a personal nature from vendors.

A native of Ohio, Dr. Sites graduated Phi Beta Kappa from The Ohio State University (OSU) in Columbus and completed her MD degree at OSU College of Medicine. Following her residency at University of Rochester Strong Memorial Hospital in New York, Dr. Sites completed a reproductive endocrinology and infertility fellowship at the University of Cincinnati in Ohio. She is board certified in obstetrics and gynecology and reproductive endocrinology.

In 1992, Dr. Sites joined the faculty at the University of Vermont, where, in 1994, she became medical director of the In Vitro Fertilization Program, and in 2001, was named director of the Fellowship Program.

In addition to her numerous peer-reviewed publications and abstracts, she is an ad hoc reviewer for the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism, Obstetrics and Gynecology, American Journal of Physiology, Fertility and Sterility, Coronary Artery Disease, Metabolism, American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Menopause, Obesity Research, and Archives of Internal Medicine.

Sites Named Director Of Reproductive Endocrinology And Infertility

UAB Professor and Chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology John C. Hauth, MD, announces the appointment of Associate Professor Cynthia K. Sites, MD, as director of the Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility. Dr. Sites joins UAB from the University of Vermont in Burlington, where she was tenured associate professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology.
She also serves as an ad hoc reviewer for the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and as an oral board examiner for the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Dr. Sites currently has more than $800,000 in research funding from NIH and the American Heart Association, examining soy phytoestrogen supplementation and menopause.

With clinical interests in menopause, infertility, endometriosis, and menstrual disorders, Dr. Sites is currently accepting patients at The Kirklin Clinic®. She may be reached at 934-1030 for academic and administrative calls: e-mail Cynthia.sites@obgyn.uab.edu. For patient appointments, call 801-7623.

IN BRIEF

TWO NEW ORLEANS HOSPITALS UNSALVAGEABLE

Donald R. Smithburg, chief executive of the Louisiana State University (LSU) Health Care Services Division, says Hurricane Katrina has irreparably damaged Charity Hospital, built in the 1930s, and Tulane’s University Hospital, constructed in the 1970s. Together, the hospitals treated more than 500,000 patients last year.

“The buildings have unsafe air, pervasive mold, and mechanical systems that were completely destroyed by the storm,” he continues. “Collective damage for the two structures is more than $445 million.” Only three hospitals are operating in New Orleans — East Jefferson, West Jefferson, and the Ochsner Clinic. Docked in New Orleans, the USNS Comfort, a naval medical ship with 1,000 beds and 12 operating rooms, is receiving patients.

UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL HR MOVES

University Hospital Human Resources relocated to the Liberty National Building at 301 20th Street S, effective October 10.

Davis Joins Pulmonary, Allergy, And Critical Care

UAB Professor and Director of the Division of Pulmonary, Allergy, and Critical Care Medicine K. Randall Young, Jr., MD, announces the appointment of Assistant Professor Jennifer J. Davis, MD.

A magna cum laude graduate of Millsaps College in Jackson, Dr. Davis completed her MD degree at University of Mississippi School of Medicine in Jackson. Following her internship and residency at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, where she was named Intern of the Year (1999) and served as chief resident (2001-2002), Dr. Davis came to UAB as a fellow in pulmonary and critical care medicine.

She was awarded the Best Teaching Fellow by the UAB Department of Internal Medicine for 2 consecutive years, and most recently served as chief fellow. Dr. Davis also received the 2004-2006 Clinical Investigators Fellowship Award and the ALTANA/Pfizer Award for Clinical Research in COPD (CHEST Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the American College of Chest Physicians) for her work, “Hydrogen Peroxide and Isoprostanes in Exhaled Breath Condensate of COPD Patients.”

With a clinical interest in general pulmonary medicine, Dr. Davis is currently accepting patients at The Kirklin Clinic®. She may be reached at 996-5190 for academic and administrative calls: e-mail jrdavis@uab.edu. For patient appointments, call 801-7545.

Commission On Status Of Women

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objectives. “Our goal is to ensure UAB meets the needs of women faculty, staff, and students through a forum that

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MED-LINK EVENT

November 3 marks the date that the School of Medicine and the Health System will jointly host the first monthly Med-Link program at the Pittman Center for Advanced Medical Studies (PCAMS), 1924 7th Avenue South.

This is an opportunity for faculty from the Joint Health Sciences, School of Medicine, and Health System to meet in a casual atmosphere after work for collegiality and refreshments (soft drinks, open bar, and snacks).

Med-Link is an expansion of the MD-Link program for medical faculty, initially established by Dr. Nancy Dunlap, that will move from WorkPlay to the UAB campus at PCAMS the first Thursday of every month from 5 PM to 7 PM. Please mark your calendar for this monthly gathering, designed to facilitate communication and foster collaborative relationships among faculty members.

To access a Synopsis article from the last 2 years, visit our Web site at www.health.uab.edu/synopsis. You can search by date or subject in the left sidebar.

UAB physicians: visit MSI, the password-protected Medical Staff intranet site, at https://horizon.hs.uab.edu.
advocates and examines progress of the university’s commitment to securing equitable opportunities and rewards for all,” says Dr. Fouad, who is director of the Minority Health and Research Center.

“We will try to be inclusive by communicating with faculty, employees, and students to discover women’s personal and professional needs.”

The commission will advise UAB President Carol Garrison, PhD, on issues, policies, and practices that affect women at UAB and report regularly to the president and UAB community on the status of initiatives they are pursuing.

When addressing the commission, Dr. Garrison encouraged members to remain positive. “Focus on the future, and pick five issues to pursue as a starting point. In this way, we can begin to accomplish our goals.”

“Women have many needs that go unaddressed by the university, not because the university does not care, but because these matters may not have been brought to the university’s attention in the proper forum,” says commission ex-officio member Louis Dale, PhD, UAB vice president of equity and diversity.

“This commission will provide that forum,” says Dr. Fouad. “We have an important mission to achieve and responsibilities to fulfill in order to ensure that all women at UAB work and learn in a supportive environment that treats them fairly and promotes their causes. UAB is an excellent place for work and learning and it has a lot to offer,” she says. “However, together we can make it an even better place, so that women from all over the country would choose UAB as the place to pursue their studies and careers.”

Mathru Joins Anesthesiology

Interim Chair of the UAB Department of Anesthesiology James Boyce, MD, announces the appointment of Professor Mali Mathru, MD.

Dr. Mathru completed his medical degree at Jawahra Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research in Pondicherry, India. He joins UAB from The University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, where, in the Department of Anesthesiology, he was director of surgical intensive care, director of the critical care fellowship program, and the Clara Tibbetts Phillips Professor of Anesthesiology. He is certified by the American Board of Anesthesiology with special certification in critical care medicine.

Dr. Mathru’s current research interests include mechanisms of upper airway obstruction during anesthesia, molecular mechanisms in reperfusion injury, heart and lung interaction, right heart dysfunction, and lung injury during mechanical ventilation.

He can be contacted at 975-3328; e-mail mamathru@uab.edu.